**Building Race Entries with Bracket Racing – Chuck Edmondson**

1. I am Chuck Edmondson from the Washington DC Region. I am an ITA road racer, a former region board member for 8 years and the program chair for our standalone Track Day (PDX) program. I am here to tell you about a significant problem in our Road Racing program and one of the ways that we chose to address the problem.
2. This is a plot of race entries at our home races from 2010 up to 2018 in the Mid-Atlantic Road Racing Series (MARRS). It tells a story of losing entries at a rate of 84 entries per year. At this rate our program would go to zero in the late 2020’s.
3. Losing entries forces entry fees to rise at an alarming rate, even if track rentals rates stay steady. These trends forced us to take a hard look at our program and to ask why this is happening.
4. I frequently hear members say that people are losing interest in racing. THIS IS SIMPLY NOT TRUE. What do I base this on? 1400 racers at the solo national championships (a Record), nearly a thousand cars at the runoffs in 2017 (a Record) , hundreds of track day programs, dozens of amateur road racing organizations, and 700 road race and circle tracks in the US.
5. Our biggest problem is that we are no longer the only game in town. The truth is that we are losing market share and that some of what we are doing is not working.
6. We need to identify our target audience and consider how to bring them in the door. Who could we bring into road racing?
   1. Solo and HPDE drivers (Time Trials and Hill Climbs)
   2. Folks new to racing
   3. NASA, other clubs and vintage racers
   4. Racers who dropped out in the recession
   5. Endurance Racers
   6. Racers with cars that are:
      1. No longer classed
      2. In classes with few competitors
7. What are the barriers to entry for these folks? Are they willing to buy or build a competitive SCCA classed car? If not, how do we bring them into the program?
8. There is no doubt in my mind that the SCCA runs the finest national amateur racing program in the country. None the less, it is important to keep in mind that 40 to 45% of our race entries can’t even enter a national race. Of the remaining 55 to 60%, less than a third are traveling national racers. It is the average racers who pay the region bills and we need something that appeals to them.
9. We started to look for ways to make racing independent of car preparation that met our safety requirements. We also needed a way to establish a balance of competition. We wanted to also encourage innovation. We wanted a focus on competition and fun and not on rule sets. We also wanted it to fit into a standard race group time slot.
10. Accomplishing this seemed impossible when viewed through the traditional lens of club racing. We needed to change our metric of classing and competing in road races.
11. Instead of classing cars based on car models, allowed modifications and technical specifications, we moved to classing a car and driver based on the combination’s demonstrated lap time potential.
12. In Sprint Bracket Road Racing, *{SBRR}*, cars compete in 8 time brackets. At Summit Point 2 second brackets seemed to be about optimum. Driver and car lap time potential is established in qualifying. Drivers that breakout into faster lap times are simply moved into a faster bracket without penalty. To welcome non-SCCA cars we established a regional class called Bracket Improved Touring (BIT). Cars in the BIT class must meet the safety requirements of GCR’s Improved Touring classes.
13. We set out to establish a brand with the moto “Any Tire, Any Motor, Any Suspension”.
14. Cut to the chase, did it work? In its first full season in 2018 *{SBRR}* attracted 89 entries. 42% were single entries at full entry fee and 58% were double dippers running in a second race group and paying a half entry fee. In 2018 the MARRS series home races were up by 73 entries overall instead of losing the 84 entries predicted by the last 8 years.
15. *{SBRR}* entries started at 10 in April. By September our 3 day double race weekend attracted over 25 cars from a wide range car types and origins.
16. This table is perhaps the most telling of the success. Of the 49 classes recognized in the MARRS series *{SBRR}* was ranked 4th in overall in entries. It was beat out by Showroom Stock Miata, Spec Miata and SRF3. (Of the 49 classes only 15 had enough entries to qualify for a MARRS champion.)
17. Who raced in Bracket? The picture shows side-by-side an ITS BMW racing with an ITA Dodge Neon driven by Mark Lillar. Mark is a 2017 runoffs podium racer in STU. Mark raced every bracket race in 2018, demonstrating the fun and quality of competition that we established.
18. A number of novice racers were attracted to bracket racing. This picture is of Josh Rubenstein who is the head of time trials program. He is a great driver but new to road racing. We also had two novices earn their full competition license in the bracket groups
19. Several vintage cars joined us in 2018 including this beautiful Porsche 914. Note that the car is classed in Bracket Improved Touring.
20. This picture, from late in the season, shows a NASA GTS-2 BMW mixing it up with several SRF3’s. That weekend had 3 NASA racers, a Porsche club driver a vintage car as well as the usual mix of SCCA drivers.
21. The SRF3’s turned out droves for the October finally including one driven by the Summit Point Track Manager.
22. Our first Production car joined us in October.
23. In the middle of MARRS Season it occurred to me that I could remove more than 100 lbs of weight from the passenger floor board in my ITA Honda CRX. Once Mark Lillar figured out what I did, he returned the next race weekend missing 2 doors, the trunk and with a bunch of carbon fiber where the hood and fenders used to be! Luckily for me the increased aerodynamic drag out weighted his additional speed in the corners. The 2019 rules now include a reference to the GCR neat and clean rule and a requirement for all doors, hood, trunk lid and fenders to be in place.
24. How did we do it? First we had to sell the idea to region. Countless hours were spent with the board of directors, the club racing committee, the director of club racing, racers workers and even the announcers. We also had to get National to approve Bracket Improve Touring as a regional class. We then enlisted the support of our close friends to support the initial races.
25. We started an ad campaign well before the season with a billboard at Summit Point across from the grid.
26. We took out several ads in Grassroots Motorsports
27. We setup a facebook page and “boosted” posts using demographic data. We obtained an easy to remember web address (*RaceDC.Info*) that linked to a bracket racing page on the region website. We wrote an article that ended up as a 4 page spread in Sports Car Magazine. We put multiple articles in the region newsletter, The Straightpipe. We also used the region constant contact account to blast the region with reminders. As the bracket group administrator, I kept a running email list with all of the bracket racing participants and reached out to them before each race weekend.
28. We designed a logo and had vinyl stickers made. We required them on the sides of all bracket racing cars.
29. We also created optional *{SBRR}*, window banners. We gave trophies to bracket racers who won the Sunday feature race. We also had a bunch of giveaway *{SBRR}*, business cards produced.
30. Who am I racing? Anyone who has ever engaged in multi-class racing knows the need to avoid interfering with another class’s championship. This is often a challenging requirement. In bracket racing the time bracket that you are in may be subject change during the race. So we made the rule in bracket you are racing everyone except those cars that are lapping you.
31. In an effort to help the announcers and race fans keep track of the brackets and breakouts one of our members, Ted Cahill, created and app that you can reach on a cell phone. Racers in each of the 2 second brackets and their place in the bracket updates every 20 seconds!
32. To sum it up, we have shown that time based sprint racing works. We have attracted cars from other organizations, from out of date SCCA cars, cars from undersubscribed classes and drivers looking for more track time. We have increased entries, Nurtured novice racers and encouraged innovation. Everyone that has participated in *{SBRR}*, has had nothing but great things to say about it. In fact the number one used word by bracket racers was FUN!
33. In 2019 we plan to have our first season Bracket Champion. Perhaps the future holds both a Fast and Slow Bracket Group. And of course we will continue to promote the concept.